



Flathead National Forest

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Media Release

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Court Upholds Special-Use Permit for Jesus Statue

Judge Finds Statue is Not a Violation of Establishment Clause

KALISPELL, MONT – On Monday, June 24, 2013, the United States District Court for the District of Montana found that the renewal of the special-use permit for the display of a statue of Jesus Christ on Whitefish Mountain Resort does not constitute a government endorsement of a religious message and thus does not violate the Establishment Clause. In the case of *Freedom from Religion Foundation versus Chip Weber, Flathead National Forest Supervisor*, District Judge Dana Christensen granted summary judgment in favor of the Defendants.

Flathead National Forest Supervisor, Chip Weber says “I am pleased that the court validated the re-issuance of this special-use permit. It is my position that the statue has been a long-standing object in the community since 1955. It is important to the community for its historical heritage in association with the early development of the ski area on Big Mountain.”

In January, 2012, Weber reauthorized a special use permit for The Knights of Columbus Council No. 1328 of Kalispell, Montana for the display of a statue on a small parcel of federal land within the Whitefish Mountain Resort permit boundary at Big Mountain in northwestern Montana. The permit is reauthorized for ten years and is for the display of a statue of Jesus Christ on a 25 foot by 25 foot parcel of land near the top of Chair Two at Whitefish Mountain Resort.

The complete court document can be found here:

https://fs.usda.gov/wps/PA_WIDContribution/simplegetfile?dDocName=STELPRDB5425539&url=

The ruling can be appealed to the Ninth District Court of Appeals.

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